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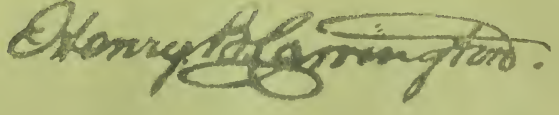
Winfield Scott

Address

by

General H. B. Carrington

U. S. A.



IN MEMORIAM

Winfield Scott

WINFIELD SCOTT.

A Great Soldier with a Great Heart.

Address by Gen. H. B. Carrington, U. S. A., on the evening of his 86th birthday, before the Massachusetts Commandery of the Loyal Legion, at its Spring Meeting in Boston, March 2, 1910.

(Supplemented by Official Documents.)

To the Mass. Commandery of the Loyal Legion, Greeting!

Commander and Companions!

I respectfully ask permission on this my 86th birthday, on release from an attack of grippe, as I may not have a better opportunity, to speak briefly of a great soldier with a great heart, Gen. Winfield Scott, commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States, who sprang so promptly to the rescue of the beleaguered garrison of Fort Sumter in 1861, when, if he had been loyally supported by the Federal authorities, the Stars and Stripes would never have left masthead so long as the sun shed its light, and years of dreadful war for the preservation of the Union and Constitution of the fathers might have been spared our country. All is right now. The Union has been restored, but at what a cost!

I make this request because I owe Gen Scott a boundless measure of personal gratitude, and do it with more freedom because of our present membership, no other commission of general or field officer during the Civil war dates back of my own, May 14, 1861, and Gen. Scott in person, without my own previous knowledge, was active in its issue. It is historic in fact, and I desire to have it on record with those of other companions of this commandery.

I was on very close relations to Gen. Scott during a painful tragic incident which he declared to have been the most painful of his life. Its sequel will be noted later.

As the Whig candidate in 1852 for the presidency of the United States, unmindful of his lack of experience in political or social science and aptitude for oratorical discussions of political issues, he ventured upon a formal political campaign, via Ohio, with New Orleans and the South as his objective of influence. Great applause and a rousing reception awaited him at Cleveland, Ohio.

At Cleveland he found awaiting his arrival the following committee from Columbus. All military and civil organizations or orders at the capital had been organized for a grand procession and welcome on his arrival. The committee consisted of Aaron F. Perry, Esq., my own former law partner, afterwards congressman from Cincinnati, and William Dennison, then my law partner, who afterwards became governor at the outbreak of the war.

A telegram reached me from Cleveland that I must act as the personal escort of Gen. Scott upon his arrival at Columbus. A salute of 21 guns was to be fired upon his leaving the railroad station, and a gun squad was awaiting his arrival. A coach and four, duly decorated, awaited his

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pleasure. All roofs and windows of the main street, High street, and all sidewalks, were crowded with thousands of eager and enthusiastic observers. A handkerchief signal was to follow the second shot of the salute for the procession to take up its march.

Upon reaching the carriage, I was advised that my seat would be at Gen. Scott's left, and upon my comment, "I do not see why this be so, unless to make the contrast more decided by the side of his magnificent physical carriage," he replied at once, with a smile: "Size does not make the man, sir. I am in the hands of your committee the same as yourself, and that is their concern."

The first shot was fired, and at the second I raised my hand to give the moving signal when an artillery man rushed from the station to tell me that by a premature discharge of the piece, two and perhaps three had been killed. Dr. Hamilton, a skillful surgeon, was in the doorway. To him, I entrusted the charge of the whole matter, with caution "to make no public demonstration of his medical service," stepped back, entered the carriage, gave the signal, and with the music of many bands and the shouts of excited witnesses the procession hastened on its route.

On reaching the Neil house, opposite the Capitol, the General was introduced and was warmly welcomed, and the hotel was soon filled with delegations to do him honor.

The most impressive body thus presented, was that of Germans under the escort of the venerable Judge Christian Heyl, who with marked excitement presented a copy of the Westcote, a local Democratic paper, and demanded whether its charges "that when in Mexico he both flogged and hung German soldiers, for absence without leave, desertion, and let Irish and other soldiers go clear," were true.

Scott, like an enraged lion, rose to his full stature of more than six feet, four inches, and as he swung wide his arms and breasted the waiting Germans, words shot forth as from a catapult. He was like a wild man, and people shrank back from his immediate presence. For a moment it seemed that he must strike some living adversary.

"What's that! What's that you say? I never heard it before! It's a devilish invention! An infamous lie! A damned falsehood! For a man who for fifty years had neither risen from sleep nor walked abroad, or even drank a cup of cold water in the field, but his mind was on his country, her honor and her welfare! This is wicked, atrocious, horrible! You see me excited! I have the right to be excited!" With sweeping arms and gestures as wild, he added: "I carried on war as a Christian, and not as a fiend!"

"Judge Heyl caught the truth, withdrew his delegation, and as they left the Neil parlor, the corridors rang with this, their response:

"Hurrah for General Scott,
The hero brave and true,
We'll place him there,
In the presidential chair,
For he's our nominee."

The speech was so incoherent and tempestuous at its opening, that Mr. Perry, editor of the Columbus, Ohio, State Journal, revised our joint notes, omitting expletives, so that the truly masterly vindication by General Scott, of his Mexican service, appeared in the November number of the American Whig Review of New York, greatly to his honor.

Mr. Perry introduced its first appearance at Columbus by the following editorial:

"Never have we witnessed a scene more imposing than when the old chieftain, with a quick and indignant response, repelled the false and malignant charge. Lofty in stature, and standing at least four inches above the tallest of those among whom he

IN EXCHANGE

stood, his form seemed gigantic, as with heightened color and flashing eye, and a wave of his hand that expressed a calm defiance of all such assailants, he uttered his emphatic protest against such assaults as that paragraph represented."

GENERAL SCOTT'S ADDRESS.

"New, and before unknown to me, are such things as have been told me. They surprise and pain me. They at once concern all that I value personally, and aim a blow at all that wherein, if I know myself, I have the highest pride. They attack my own identity! The principles for which I had believed I need never search my own bosom in vain, are undermined, or denied me! I am met with charges of injustice and cruelty while leading an American army through Mexico, and while participating alike in its trials and its triumphs!

Gentlemen, it was my lot to lead an American army upon a foreign field. I went, resolved to sustain, in the forefront of my progress the high-tide water mark of our own American civilization, in all its moral and civil virtue. The standard of our own, and not the practices of that foreign country, was the standard which I sought for the government of men's passions and the control of the license and excesses of war. Alike to Americans, whether native or of foreign birth, and to Mexicans, I declared my purpose, and exhibited my principles of action.

I promulgated the martial code. Doubtless, you all have read it. I deemed it necessary. I could do nothing without it. It announced the spirit of our progress, and held amenable to punishment all who forgot manhood, and threatened to bring shame upon our flag—dishonor to our arms—or a reproach upon our virtue! Without it we had not conquered, or if we had conquered, the brightest trophy of our conquest had been wanting. It would have been a physical triumph, and a physical triumph alone. Humanity would have disowned us. I promulgated that order. Read it, and read it again, gentlemen, and then bear me witness, that it was in my heart, as it was almost hourly on my lips, for continued months, to carry with American arms and under the American Flag, even into the enemies' country, all the elements of social order, and that regard for personal right that belonged to our own free institutions in the United States.

Yes, I sought to carry with me, and resolved to maintain, at all hazards, among my own command, and also that people among whom we should be thrown, that high standard of virtue and honor which we boasted at home. Had I not been less than an American, and recreant to the highest interests of humanity, and the age we rejoice in, if I had done less? They say I hanged some Germans, and tied up and flogged others. Gentlemen, some persons were hanged in Mexico. The names of all of them I do not now recollect. Whether any were Germans or not, I know not. But for what—yes, for what were they hanged? I hanged one for murder, gentlemen; I hanged one for rape upon an innocent young female, and for profane and wicked church robbery. All knew the law that was over them. Every man of them knew that he would be held as answerable for vile misdeeds against the laws of God and man, as if he were then upon American soil.

For such crimes they suffered—for such crimes as here, in your own Ohio—a land of law—would have brought down upon them severe penalties, and with equal justice. Some did suffer death! But their trial was fair, impartial, and upon the same principles of solid law upon which they would have been adjudged guilty here among you. Do some say I hanged fifteen Germans, and that others were arraigned and flogged without cause or trial? Gentlemen, I know nothing of it. It is false—it is a lie—an invention—gentlemen—a lie.

I see aged citizens before me. I see eminent lawyers here. And, gentlemen, you see me much excited. But is it not for cause? For one who for fifty years has scarcely walked, rose, slept or eaten, or even taken a cup of cold water, in the field, the town, or the camp, but his thoughts were of his country—her virtue—her renown—her honor; to be thus assailed—it is monstrous—it is intolerable! Gentlemen, I did, with a high hand, sustain the law, which, with uprightness in my heart, I determined to sustain. I did hang for murder! I did hang for rape! I did hang for treason! And I flogged thieves and pickpockets! For, gentlemen, let me again say, I not only carried with me, but I resolved with every resource I could command, to sustain fearlessly and effectually, in its virtue and in its choicest blessings, not only to my own command, but to the defenceless and peaceful Mexicans, that civilization, yes, that christian civilization, of which I was proud to believe that army might appear a worthy representative.

But, gentlemen, I was no respecter of persons. American or Mexican—native born or foreign born, whoever knew the law and obeyed it not—whoever, reckless of his own responsibilities and the rights of others, trampled under foot and set at naught the law that was over all, I punished. I did hang for the crimes stated, and I would have hung a hundred seekers of innocent blood, and violaters of female chastity, if so many had been the offenders! And for this, perverted and misshaped, I am made answerable to a charge against which my every feeling revolts, and which my own nature and my own life repel. No, gentlemen, it is a lie, (the charge as made, or that any were wrongfully punished) a false and groundless lie. I am not unthankful to my good friend who has told me of these things. It was right.

But, gentlemen, I stand here before you, and declare as I have already declared, and again declare, the principles that governed my command in Mexico are those of my life. To that life in my country's service I need not appeal in vain for an answer now. With equal freedom and confidence, do I throw myself upon the honest verdict of every man, who, with me, served his country in the fields of Mexico."

Enthusiasm pervaded the evening gatherings, and the banquet passed along until quite a late hour in its formal course.

Dr. Hamilton had advised me that the slain and wounded had been cared for, and both Mr. Dennison and Mr. Perry agreed with myself that the accident so far as possible should not enter into a record of the day's celebration.

Suddenly, late at the banquet, whispers as to an accident came near Gen. Scott's chair. By his side was Surgeon Gen. Gibson, his staff companion on his journey. Scott straightened himself up, "Did you hear that? What is it? About some accident today?" All at once he caught what I supposed he had never noticed, and said: "Did the stopping that salute mean anything?"

Secrecy was no longer possible. He broke down absolutely, like a weeping child. Even when accompanied to his room, it seemed as if he never would regain composure. He ordered his morning train from Cincinnati, en route to New Orleans, to be countermanded. He cried out: "It is one thing to lose an arm in battle, but, my God, no office in this world is worth a limb, much less a life! Why did you not tell me that the farce of a funeral procession, converted into a pretended jubilee of joy, was my fate today? It will kill me." Before midnight he became more composed and acceded to the suggestion that we go together at daybreak to the homes of the afflicted households.

At six o'clock the next morning, Robert Neil, Sr., accompanied us to the modest

homes of the afflicted families in the fifth ward, the German ward of Columbus. Gen. Scott's great height compelled him to stoop on entrance, and with difficulty a chair was placed for his use. His first reception was cold and repulsive. The extent of the calamity was hardly realized in these homes. The gun squad of men I had personally known. The great soldier wept like a child. His anguish was so intense as not to be ignored. One little boy, standing between his knees, said: "Soldier, don't cry; you didn't do it." With each household he left a $20 gold piece, promised never to forget them," and he kept his promise.

From that date, Gen. Scott kept me supplied with military books, and on parting the next day, left me this memorandum, "Many a battle has been lost or won by silence, such as yours of yesterday, proving the wisdom of silence, when actual knowledge, would have been ruin. You ought to be in the army! You may be wanted. I'll never forget you." And he never did.

When at the opening of the Civil war a proposition was pending to add to the obliterated regular army, nine additional regiments, of Infantry, each of three battalions, of eight companies each, with an aggregate complement of 2,443 officers and men, he requested President Lincoln to give one of the Colonel's commissions to the Adjutant General of Ohio.

This request of Gen. Scott's was forwarded to myself, as approved by Presi dent Lincoln's cabinet, with the following official advice of Secretary S. P. Chase, "Why not accept this colonelcy, with the prospect of brigadiership?"

I declined the offer, because, already it has been designed to assign to me a South American or a southern European diplomatic position, on account of threatening lung troubles, that in 1855, almost cost my life.

To this declination came the rejoinder, "there are other services as valuable as those in the field. If you accept, your duties, as important, may not risk your health in immediate field service."

Not until June 24, 1861, did I accept the colonelcy of the 18th U. S. Infantry.

What followed? There was no regular infantry! All other new colonels were needed to command volunteer brigades, divisions or corps.

A western army "Camp of Enlistment and Instruction" was established in Ohio, called Camp Thomas, under the command of the colonel of the new 18th U. S. Infantry. Canby of the 19th, a native of Indiana, was in New Mexico. Indianapolis was made headquarters for recruits for that regiment. All regiments above the 14th, were to be raised and disciplined at the west, of which Camp Thomas was made the general headquarters.

To the 16th was assigned as a major, Sydney Coolidge of Boston, Mass. To the 18th, as a major, was assigned Adjt. Gen. Frederick Townsend of New York, who resigned the colonelcy of his N. Y. regiment after the battle of Big Bethel, to accept this majority.

Col. W. T. Sherman of the 13th Infantry, as a general officer, was barely holding his own at Mudraugh's Hill, Kentucky. He was called 'Crazy' in his estimate of forces intended for the war.

Senator Thomas Ewing of Ohio, Sherman's father-in-law, came in person to Camp Thomas, at the general's request, that I support him at once. The war department declined. Gen. Mitchell at Cincinnati directly ordered me to join him with the 18th Infantry to "seize and occupy Cumberland Gap." The war department declined. But as early as May 7, general order No. 17, office of adjt. general of Ohio, (quoted, in foot note under heading 'Ohio,' vol. 1, 1861, Appleton's Encyclopedia), divided Ohio into districts of

organization, at once, of a military reserve, of 1,000 companies (100 regiments) for probable service in the field during the year. Secretary Cameron had declined the offer of 50, instead of 13, the assigned quota, but approved the equipment of other regiments, then in camp, as they might be wanted.

That offer, bearing date April 23, 1861, reads as follows: (See War Records Page 104, vol 1, series 111).

Headquarters Ohio Militia and Volunteer Militia, Adjutant-General's Office,
Columbus, April 23, 1861.

Hon. S. Cameron,
Secretary of War:

We have nothing from you since dispatch not to forward, etc. We are urgent that a requisition for the Kentucky quota reach us soon. We have the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Regiments raised and can make the force 50,000 men. I speak upon due reflection and upon the figures. I shall organize six or eight regiments additional to our quota and put them under drill at any event, and the feeling is so intense that I do not limit the number. We will learn much by—; Edward Ball (see 104, as above) left this a. m. We have corn for the year, whether we plant much or not and could never so well meet the issues of war. When the order is "Advance," Ohio will go to the Gulf if need be. Yours, etc.,

Henry B. Carrington,
Adjutant-General.

The following reply of Secretary Cameron appears on page 124, War Records, same volume and series:

Secretary Cameron to Col. Carrington, Columbus O., April 27, 1861:

"War Dept., Washington, April 27, 1861. Col. H. B. Carrington, Columbus, O.

Dear Sir:—I have yours of the 23d inst., and would tender you, as I have already done to His Excellency, the Governor of Ohio, the thanks of this department, for the promptness and energy with which you have met the call of the government. I regret that, according to the plan adopted and under which this department is acting, we can only accept for the quota first called for from Ohio. You will do well however, in organizing and drilling other regiments, so as to be prepared to meet any emergency that may arise.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) Simon Cameron, Sec. of War."

This address as "Col." at that early date was left for later solution.

Of all these facts, Gen. Scott, as well as the president and his cabinet, had full knowledge. In fact, the first two regiments of the thirteen assigned to Ohio left for Washington, within sixty hours after receipt of President Lincoln's first call; and these regiments were made up by telegrams sent at midnight, or by personal calls when nearby, of the very best companies of the organized and well drilled state militia.

As a fact, nine of these regiments had to be sent into West Virginia, and their battery had appeared in the Battle of Phillipi before mustering officers could be secured to muster into service the Ohio Volunteer proper, then in Camp Dennison, awaiting muster. (See Rebellion Records, Series III, Vol I, page 124, dated April 27, 1861.)*

In this connection other data are relevant, in addition to notes at the end of this address.

Catherinus P. Buckingham, of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, and a graduate of West Point, had been appointed Assist Adjt.-General of Ohio, but by special arrangement of the War Department, Col. Carrington was to retain office until the first 26 regiments were organized.

His lengthy official report to Secretary Cameron, dated June 21st, 1861, of all forces organized under his personal supervision, appears on pages 288 and 289,

Official War Records, Series III, Volume I.

On page 357, same volume, appears letter from Adjt.-Gen. L. Thomas, U. S. A., bearing date July 27, 1861, fully setting forth the services of the nine regiments of Ohio state troops and Col. Barnett's artillery of six guns, which had served in West Virginia before the Ohio Volunteers could be placed in the field.

On pages 387 and 393, dated August 3 and August 8 (same volume) appear communications as to the delay of the Government in supplying mustering officers.

During these months, at Camp Thomas, itself, every condition incident to a sudden call to the field was maintained, even as to city absences, or long absence from camp.

By request of Gov. Todd, an incipient outbreak from Camp Chase, by prisoners of war, was reduced to order, and a detachment of the 18th, sent to that camp, was soon withdrawn. An official report was made of the incident to the governor, immediately.

The first battalion of the 16th, Maj. Sydney Coolidge, of Boston, afterwards killed at Chickamauga, was taken by Col. Carrington, in November, to Louisville and turned over to the division of Gen. Mitchel. Two battalions of the 18th, at the same time, were delivered by Col. Carrington to Gen. Thomas at Lebanon, Ky., and to these were added the 9th and 35th Ohio, and the 2d Minn., as a Brigade, under his command. Emergencies required that he first complete his recruiting service at the west, and the next senior colonel took his brigade into the Battle of Mill Springs, Ky.

To return to the subject of this sketch.

Upon learning of the progress made in the organization of the 18th U.S. Infantry, Gen. Scott invited its colonel to his headquarters at Washington.

On the day that Munson Heights was occupied by Confederate troops and when Massachusetts avenue was crowded by double trains of bread wagons, passing to the Federal Capital, the national bakery for the time being, Gen. Scott, over his personal signature issued a special order, in my favor, directing all post commanders and other officers then preparing for defence of the capital, to give the bearer full respect in his inspections of fortifications and disciplinary movements of the army. Its date was Sept. 25, 1861. All forts east of the Acqueduct were visited, as well as the "Sheleton Drills" of regiment, brigade, and division movements in "Evolutions of the Line."

Enlargement of the recruiting service on Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, in 1862, involved the personal organization, equipment, and paying bounty of all Indiana volunteers; and, upon my immediate promotion as Brig. Gen. of Volunteers, the protection of the Ohio river border for fully three years, when I rejoined Gen. Thomas, until he left Kentucky for the Pacific coast; and then, my own regiment, recruited to its maximum strength, in Sept. 1865, was ordered to the defence of the Indian frontier. During its existence, as a three battalion regiment, it included an aggregate of 4,773 men. Having the appointment of all second lieutenants, I enlisted educated young men with scrupulous care. Several attained the rank of brigadier general. I mention three. The first recruit of the 18th Infantry was Henry B. Freeman, now brigadier general retired. Another, Gilbert S. Carpenter, a student of Western Reserve College, became colonel of his regiment during the Spanish American War, and at his death, was on the army list as a brigadier general retired. A third, John Hitchoock, son of the president of the Western Reserve College, then but a young lieutenant, gave

his life for the flag, in the battle of Stone River.

In the aggregate of Special Recruiting Service, more than 120,000 men were duly organized and placed in the field for immediate active duty.

When I left Gen. Scott in 1861, to return to Camp Thomas, his parting words, afterwards more than once recalled to my memory by his favorite A.D.C., then A.A.G. who became later adjutant general of the army, Col. E. D. Townsend, (who countersigned Gen. Scott's special order) were simply these:

"You are my own colonel, and I knew you would do it."

He was a "great soldier with a great heart," and his manuscript duty-detail, above noticed, has to myself and family, a value as if it were a gold medal rather than as a great soldier's simple expression of his implicit confidence and sincere respect.

(Signed) Henry B. Carrington,
Brig. Gen. U.S.A. Retired,
Col. 18th U. S. Inf. May 14, 1861.

*Note—This "Light Battery" of the State Militia, then know as "Barnett's," had been long organized by Capt. David L. Wood, quartermaster general of Ohio from 1857 to 1861. During a trip to Niagara, fully mounted, it was there reviewed by Gen. Scott, who pronounced its practice to "closely vie with that of Ringold's of the regular army." Wood was appointed a captain of the 18th Infantry, instead of artillery, which, owing to his personal weight and age, made foot service impracticable for him to take up Infantry movements.

The battery went into service under the following order:

Columbus, O., April 20, 1861.

Col. James Barnett, Cleveland, O.

Report your six pieces, caissons, and full battery, including the Geneva company, at Columbus, forthwith, Monday, if possible. You can hire horses for the guns here, or at your point of service. Bring harness and everything else. Twenty men to each gun. You retain Colonel's rank. By order,

H. B. Carrington, Adjutant General.

A foundry was opened on Sunday, and round shot were cast. Ladies left church to make powder bags. Powder was brought from Xenia. When Barnett's battery entered the Columbus Railroad Station, Pres. Israel Andrews of Marietta College and Rufus Putnam, one of its trustees, were at the depot, about to call upon Gov. Dennison and beg for artillery. Without leaving the depot they went home with the battery and it was planted on the heights back of Parkersburg at midnight, just in time to repel the advancing Confederate forces, which were pursued and routed at Phillipi.

It is needless to add that James Barnett as a major general of Volunteers, still shares the respect of the American people hardly less than any general officer who bore part in military service during the years from 1861-1865.

H. B. C.

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